



From the Headmaster

I would like to start by wishing you all a Happy New Year and the very best wishes for 2021, a year in which I hope we regain more than a semblance of normality!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those members of staff – both support and teaching – who have been working so hard behind the scenes over the holidays to get systems in place for the start of term, and also to thank you as parents who have been so flexible and understanding, despite the relatively last-minute nature of many of the government guidelines. A third lockdown clearly brings with it a significant number of challenges and I do not for a second underestimate the pain and distress that so many families have endured; my thoughts are with all those whose lives have been significantly affected by the pandemic. I fully appreciate how challenging the last twelve months have been for our whole community in terms of mental wellbeing, social interaction, disruption and the cancellation of everything from public examinations to trips and sports fixtures, and again I would like to thank you all for facing these challenges with such magnanimity, patience and good spirits.

With each challenge, however, comes opportunity. When the pandemic hit in the early part of last year, almost overnight scientists globally united as never before to focus on this single enemy. Within weeks the first tests and treatments for the disease had been developed, a disease which had only existed for a matter of months. It is absolutely unprecedented to have gone from the identification of a previously unknown disease to the development and deployment of a vaccine within just ten months, and this, in itself, is an illustration of what can be achieved during such times; where there's a will, there's certainly a way. Likewise on a local scale, 2020 at the RGS was characterised by a steely determination to persevere and continue in the face of adversity, a genuine desire for the pandemic, far from defeating us, to provide new openings and opportunities. Ingenuity, resolve and togetherness have been the hallmarks of the RGS at every turn. Rather than leaving a lasting impression of negativity, the qualities of kindness, support and generosity have triumphed. The School Hymn, *To Be a Pilgrim*, champions the strength and courage required in times of hardship and provides reassurance that nothing can daunt our spirit. I can assure you that, indeed, nothing will daunt our spirit at the RGS.

And so, with our physical gates closed and a period of remote learning upon us once again, we must all work together to make the very best of the current situation. The 21st century demands young people to be flexible and to find solutions, to be independent and motivated, to think outside the box and to respond positively to challenges. This period of remote learning will have its challenges but it also provides a gilt-edged opportunity for us to refine each and every one of these skills and for our students to emerge stronger, better and more confident at the end of the process. They will need your support and your guidance as parents; we as a school will do everything we can to deliver the very best education we can. The staff are here to support you and your sons and please do not hesitate to contact your son's Tutor if you have any concerns about his progress or wellbeing. Likewise, we continue to reassure the boys that every level of pastoral support remains available to them: their Tutor or Head of Year, the School Counsellor and the School Nurse, and, of course, every single member of staff. No boy should suffer in silence; despite being remote we are still absolutely committed to every single individual.

Author and motivational speaker Vivian Greene once said, "*Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning how to dance in the rain.*" Now is the time for us to embrace the storms both physical and metaphorical and ensure we make the very best of every opportunity. I have no doubt as a community that we shall do just that.

I thank you all for your continuing support: stay healthy, stay connected, stay positive. *#RGSTogether*